

## Group News

Despite the plummeting temperatures the world of archaeology is as busy as ever. Commercial archaeology units across the country are stretched to their limits, due in part to the continued boom in property development and the demand for new housing. Its no fun digging in the winter with frozen fingers but the work must go on!

You may have seen our Treasurer, Tricia Crompton, on the news recently explaining a recent discovery at John Street in Carlisle. This included medieval metal-working evidence and a possible iron-working furnace, which lay outside the medieval city walls. Beneath these were Roman layers containing pottery.

Hot of the press is the discovery of the largest known Neolithic timber circles in the country, by Durham University at Catterick. This complex of ritual monuments consists of four timber circles, the largest of which is 180m in diameter, with a radiocarbon date of 2500BC. Geophysical survey has located other likely circles nearby.

Included with this newsletter is our second report on field survey at Kirkland. This edition focuses on the evidence for potash pits and includes two exam-

ples surveyed by our members this summer.

Our Autumn programme of evening talks has been very successful. November's talk by Brian Roberts on the development of Cumbrian villages attracted the greatest number of visitors yet (see page 2). Also included in this edition is a report on the October talk by Dr Nigel Melton which was also well attended (page 3).

The annual general meeting will be held at the Market Hall Supper Room on January 11th at 700pm. So please do come along. The meetings are generally short and to the point, and will be followed by two talks by group members on some of their activities over the last year. A copy of the minutes from last year's AGM is enclosed with this newsletter.

Please note that in January the subscriptions are also due. If you have not already renewed your subscription, please use the form enclosed and bring it along to a meeting, or post to our treasurer. In return you will receive a new membership card which also serves as a receipt.

Stay warm this winter and have a happy Christmas. We hope to see you at the AGM in the New Year.

Martin Railton

## Events in 2005

### THE ROMANS IN EDEN

The Eden Valley is full of Roman sites and history and yet little has been done in recent years to bring together what is known about the Roman presence and the monuments they left behind. Appleby Archaeology has asked four specialists in Roman history to present their knowledge at a One Day Conference to be held at Appleby Grammar School on Saturday, 17 September 05.

*The Romans in Cumbria:* Professor David Shotter, Lancaster University

*The Roman Sites of the Eden Valley:* Tony Wilmot

*The Roman Cemetery at Brougham:* Hilary Cool

*Roman Carlisle:* Frank Giecco

### SOCIETY FOR LANDSCAPE STUDIES

#### 'LANDSCAPES OF EDEN'

**Study Weekend 13/14/15 May 2005.**

Organiser: Harry Hawkins. Leaders: Professor Brian Roberts, Durham University; Dr Tom Clare, Liverpool John Moores University.

The weekend will be an introduction to the landscapes of the Eden Valley in Cumbria. The study weekend will look at the principal influences on the landscape in the Eden Valley: inevitably the Romans who built a chain of forts and signal stations to guard the road from Scotch Corner over Stainmore and onto to Carlisle but who also probably regarded the valley as a vast farm for the garrisons on Hadrian's Wall; the Norman settlement of castles and planned villages; voluntary and parliamentary enclosure; and the mining of the mineral resources of the North Pennines that has left a complex of small scale industrial landscapes dotted along the East Fellsides.

Contact Harry for further details:  
Tel. 01768 864340

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## The Development of Villages in the Eden Valley with Brian Roberts

There was standing room only when Appleby Archaeology Group welcomed Professor Brian Roberts of Durham University to their November meeting. His subject was the Development of the English Village and how it related to villages in the Eden Valley.

Brian Roberts introduced his subject by referring to King Alfred the Great who had said that for a king to maintain power he "required men to fight, men to pray, and men to work". He explained that both before and after the Norman Conquest the main resources came from the land and that had influenced how people had established homesteads and villages. He also stressed that England had been a slave economy during the early Middle Ages and people were a commercial asset.

He showed a diagram of the basic settlement. This would have started with a single farmstead which was often named after the man who had first lived there. An area would be cleared for crops and pasture. Later kinship clusters would have developed as smaller dwellings were built for relatives. In time further huts would be built, perhaps for slaves captured in a recent raid, perhaps for tenants and so kinship hamlets of the kind referred to in the Icelandic Sagas, came into existence. Fences were built around the dwellings separating them from the arable land and meadows. A second enclosing boundary would separate

that improved land from the impoverished open land and woodland beyond.

From his life time research Brian Roberts had constructed maps which showed the distribution of nucleations (villages, hamlets and homesteads) across England in the early 17th century and mid-19th century. Areas with very sparse occupation corresponded to geographical features such as the Pennines, the Fens and the mountains of the Lake District. Three zones of settlement stood out on both maps: there was a central belt stretching from Dorset to Northumberland where there were numerous villages and then on either side were two areas where settlements were more dispersed. These patterns of nucleations can be traced back to the 12th century.

He then outlined his classification of village forms based on villages found in the central belt identifying two essential patterns of initial development. The farm and outbuildings (tofts) were arranged either in two rows with a central street or as an agglomeration, perhaps around a village green. The settlement would have been surrounded by fields divided into strips for the individual tofts. In many parts of the country the field length would have been a furlong and as social and economic changes took place and the population increased surrounding areas would have been cleared and developed and di-

vided into further strips. This pattern is found particularly east of the Pennines.

The pattern had not been followed to the same extent in villages in the Eden Valley where the strips tended to vary in length and could be as long as 800m. He mentioned Great Asby, as an example where the strips were 600m, much longer than a furlong (200m). The distribution of the strips also varied, as in Melmerby, where they were arranged in 4 blocks. He put forward a number of possible explanations including the nature of the landscape, the social conditions and the fact that Cumbria did not become part of Norman England until the invasion of William Rufus in 1092. There is evidence that the Normans brought in settlers from other parts of the country and may have established new communities that needed longer and larger crofts than was the norm elsewhere. His general conclusion was that settlement in the Eden Valley before 1092 was of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets but after the arrival of the Normans many of the villages in the Eden Valley were planned to the standard layout described above.

Professor Robert's interesting and often humorous talk led to many questions from the floor and lengthy discussion over coffee. The meeting was concluded with an appreciative vote of thanks.

Phyllis Rouston



## Polesworth: A country pottery with Dr Nigel Melton

Dr Nigel Melton from Bradford University introduced the Appleby Archaeology Group to the working of a country pottery in the 17th and 18th centuries. He based his talk on his experience at an excavation in Polesworth, a village in Warwickshire a few miles south east of Tamworth. The village lies on the edge of the Warwickshire coal fields where the geological conditions provide suitable clay and fuel for pottery production.

There is evidence of two major periods of pottery production in the surrounding area. Firstly by the Romans from the 1st to 4th century and mortaria (large shallow dishes) from the area have been found as far north as Hadrian's wall. The second period of major production lasted from the 12th to 14th century and was based around Nuneaton where 100 medieval kilns have been found. Terracotta roof tiles, bricks and drainage pipes continued to be made but production was on a small scale and by 1700, records indicate that there was only 1 potter working.

In Polesworth one of the roads is named Potters Lane and local tradition supported the idea that there had been a pottery but there was little evidence until the 1950s when a jug was found with Polesworth 1801 written on as decoration. It was not until the late 1970s that investigations began with

members of the local history and archaeology groups field walking the gardens in Potters Lane. The significant break through came in 1986 when one of the members spotted pieces of pottery (shards) in the rubble of a building site in the village a little way from Potters Lane. The builders, who conveniently were about to go on holiday, gave permission for further investigations of what turned out to be waste from a pottery. A trench was put in parallel to the waste dump and this revealed that a pit had been dug initially for the purpose of obtaining clay. Later the same pit had been used to discard ash and waste products, such as broken misfired pots and pieces of clay used to protect the pots during firing. There were distinct layers of debris suggesting two phases when this backfilling had occurred.

From the study of the pieces of pottery it was found that a range of vessels had been made and that most had been hand thrown. There was coarse ware, lead glazed on the inside and on the upper part of the external surface and finer pottery of patterned slip ware. The majority of the pottery was dairy ware and included milk pans, butter pots and cylindrical jars. These vessels had different rims suggesting different periods of production. A distinctive pie crust edge was seen on the plates. Unglazed agricultural wares were also found such as plant pots some with patterned edges and side drainage holes. One very large pot was reconstructed and found to have the

date 6th of May 17.... but to the frustration of the archaeologists the shard with the year on it was not found.

The pottery would have changed little over the years so it was difficult to date. Pieces of clay pipe were found in the debris, many bearing the maker's initials enabling the experts to date them and thus the pottery lying in the same layer. Pottery production lasted throughout the 18th century but one document records the transportation of Polesworth pots in 1688 and the jug found with the date 1801 indicates a longer period of working.

Records tell us that it was a family business employing, probably, six people with one or two of them being potters. No remains of the kiln have been found but it is likely to have been a coal fired brick kiln. The pottery that was made would have supplied the local community within a radius of perhaps 10-12 miles. Horticultural pots from Polesworth have been found to the south at Castle Bromwich but no Polesworth pottery has been found to the north which may have been supplied by the potteries of Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

Dr Melton concluded by describing a large pottery find (an assemblage) in a ditch clearing in a village 12 miles from Polesworth. This find suggested that the local coach-

## WINTER PROGRAMME

ing inn had had a clearout to make way for the, then modern, factory produced wares that were becoming available around 1780. A wide range of decorated pottery, some of which would have been used for drinking tea, was found, suggesting that as the fashion changed the crockery was replaced. Other items found included chamber pots, horticultural pots, medicine and wine bottles, beer mugs, but no drinking glasses! This is the only assemblage that has been found in a rural setting and it provides an insight into what was happening at a rural coaching inn in the 1700s.

Dr Melton answered a number of questions from the floor before being thanked and warmly applauded for his interesting and informative talk.

Phyllis Rouston

### Pre-conquest Ironwork from Asby-winderwath Common

7.30 Tue 14th Dec

This site near Asby was visited by the group several years ago following a chance find by metal detectorists. Ben Edwards will tell us about this exiting discovery of ironwork.

### AGM and Member's Evening

7.00pm Tues 11th Jan

Our Annual General Meeting will be followed at 7.30pm by short talks by members of the group. This is a good opportunity to catch up with what other members have been doing and plan the year ahead.

Talks are free to members and are held in The Supper Room, upstairs from the Appleby Market Hall. Non-members are welcome (£1.50 entrance fee).

### The work of the County Archaeologist

7.30pm Tue 8th Feb

The county archaeologist for Cumbria, Richard Newman will explain his work and the role of the archaeology section within Cumbria County Council. This includes the Sites and Monuments Records which are the primary resource for information on Cumbrian archaeology.

### Prehistoric Rock Art

7.30pm Tue 8th Mar

This long awaited talk will be given by Stan Beckensall who is an enthusiastic amateur of the highest calibre. He has written several books on prehistoric rock art and will be explaining something of its mystery and occurrence.



Phyllis Rouston  
White House  
Brampton  
Appleby  
CA16 6JS



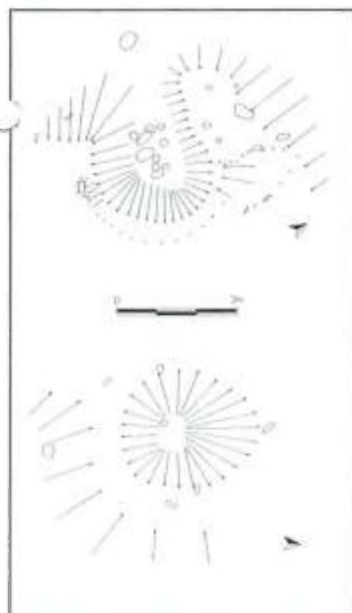
SENDER:

MARTIN RAILTON (EDITOR), PEAR TREE COTTAGE, KIRKLAND ROAD, SKIRWITH, PENRITH, CUMBRIA, CA10 1RL Email: martin@fellside-eden.freereserve.co.uk



## POTASH PITS AT KIRKLAND

We have been visiting Kirkland since 2000 and in particular have focussed on the last enclosed field before the open fell along the track to Cross Fell and Garrigill. Field surveys have discovered a number of features including low curving banks forming enclosures, possible hut circles, rectangular features, possible field cairns, a stone fast structure which may have been associated with the water supply to the settlement and two circular pits each approximately 4.00-5.00m in diameter and 1.00m deep. The first pit (A) is not in the study field but nearer the village and had been known about for some years but the second (B) which is alongside Kirkland Beck was discovered on our first field survey in 2002. Both were surveyed in detail this year.



*Plans of Pit A (top) and Pit B (bottom)*

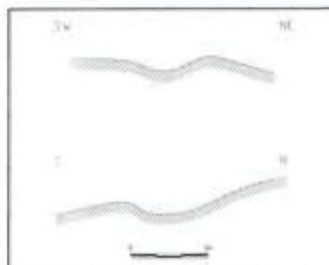
In May we invited Mike Davies-Shiel an well known industrial archaeologist and lecturer to visit the site and give us his opinion on the pits. He immediately confirmed that the pits were 'potash kilns' similar to many that he has identified in the Lake District over the years. Mike has also researched the growth of the wool trade in the county and use of the kilns to produce potash from bracken. The kilns burnt greenish bracken which was grown as a crop and harvested every four years, being cut from Michaelmas Day, the 29<sup>th</sup> September. The ash from the bracken was then mixed with burnt lime to make caustic potash, then tallow and then boiled in soft water to make lyes, a term still used by modern textile manufacturers. In the time of Henry VIII the kilns were called E-lyeing Hearths. The lyes was then used to wash wool before it was dyed. Kendal became the main centre for wool dyeing in the area although it is quite possible it was done locally as well. The process of using pits to burn bracken apparently continued up until the 1850s in the lake District and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Trossachs in Scotland.

According to Mike, a typical potash pit was built of drystone walling set into the side of a bank and close to a trackway, occasionally it would stand alone in a small enclosure on the lower fellside or just outside the head-dyke where a 'sheep-gate' gave access to the fells. When complete a pit would be about 3m high at the draught hole but level with the ground level at the rear. Pre-Elizabethan kilns were larger while those associated with the monasteries of Furness and Holme Cultram were very large.

Of the two pits at Kirkland, A fits the description above; it is close to the track to Garrigill and some 100m outside what was the fell gate until about 1850 when the lower fellside was enclosed to form the present fields. The pit has an opening towards the stream facing NW, which could be the collapsed draught hole and is about 2m high at this point. Pit B does not fit so easily, it is 900m north of the fell gate and 180m east of the Garrigill track but there are traces of another track nearby and its position may have been chosen so it was closer to the higher areas of bracken. This pit has no visible draught hole which would be on the stream side, NE and is also about 2m high at this point. Both pits are therefore smaller than others described by Mike Davies-Shiel but this may reflect local domestic use rather than a commercial enterprise.

Excavation would confirm whether the pits have a structure and whether they were used for potash. We hope to excavate one of them sometime in the future. In the meantime you may like to look for more of them; for example, the author has recently discovered one alongside the track to Melmerby Fell.

Harry Hawkins  
(illustrations by Martin Railton)



*Profiles of Pit A (top) and Pit B*